

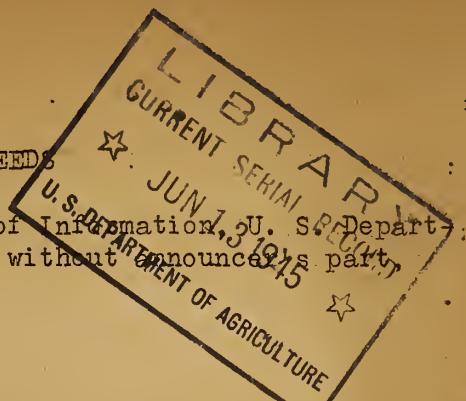
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A THE BATTLE AGAINST THE WEEDS

Recorded by Ernest Moore and M. L. DuMars, Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Tuesday, May 22, 1945. Time, without announcement, 4 minutes, 50 seconds.



ANNOUNCER: (LIVE) And now by transcription...from the United States Department of Agriculture...we learn how science helps the farmer keep the weeds under control.

It's a hard-fought war -- this war against the weeds. The farmers' weapons range from the good old standby, "clean tillage and cultivation" -- through chemicals and oils, and so-called "flame-throwers" -- to the newest weed-killer of all, the chemical known as "2,4-D."

But listen to the story, as told by Ernie Moore and Duke DuMars of the United States Department of Agriculture.

TRANSCRIPTION

DUKE DUMARS: Ernie, before we tell how to get rid of the weeds -- don't they have a purpose in life?

ERNIE MOORE: Not in my life!

DUMARS: After all, they say a weed is "only a plant out of place."

MOORE: It's out of place all right -- if it's in my corn patch!

DUMARS: Don't weeds restore valuable nutrients to the soil?

MOORE: Yes -- after they take 'em out of the soil in the first place.

DUMARS: They act as a soil cover.

MOORE: Can't you think of any better way to get a soil cover?

DUMARS: Well -- some weeds are good to eat. Don't you like dandelion greens and wild mustard?

MOORE: I can raise all the greens I want in my Victory garden.

DUMARS: Okay. I see you have no use at all for weeds.

MOORE: No sir, there's no use trying to make out a case for the weeds. I've been talking with Mr. Kephart -- the man in charge of weed-control work for the Department of Agriculture -- and we've just finished an imaginary trip through the Nation's weed patch. Have you any idea how many acres of good cropland are out of commission because of weeds?

DUMARS: No, I haven't.

MOORE: Over two million acres.

DUMARS: Two million acres!

MOORE: Yes sir! And besides all the field weeds -- think of the weeds that clog up irrigation canals, drainage ditches, city waterworks -- streams and rivers.

DUMARS: Like the water hyacinth -- along the Saint Johns River in Florida.

MOORE: That's one of the worst of all. But the biggest part of the Nation's weed patch is on the range and pasture lands of the West. There are five million acres -- that should be in grass -- taken over by worthless shrubs and small trees.

DUMARS: Boy! We really do have a weed patch!

MOORE: And I haven't even mentioned the weeds that grow along the highways -- and 300,000 miles of railroad track.

DUMARS: Oh I'm convinced. Weeds are guilty.

MOORE: They're guilty of depriving us of food. And that's a pretty serious charge. But now that we've shown the extent of the Nation's weed patch -- let's tell what's being done to keep the weeds under control. Take bindweed, for example.

DUMARS: Do you think they'll ever lick bindweed?

MOORE: Sure they will! Think of what they've done in the past ten years. In the old days, before they learned how to control this pest, a spot no bigger than this, today -- would be big as this, tomorrow.

DUMARS: And eventually you'd have a solid field of bindweed.

MOORE: Clutching and choking and killing out all your crops. But after the State Experiment Stations and the Department of Agriculture had made some 8,000 tests, they learned how to keep bindweed under control. Instead of trying to cultivate once a week, they found it was better to cultivate about every two weeks, and follow a method of alternate tillage and cropping. As a result, they've cleaned up over 200,000 acres of the original weed -- and the end is in sight.

DUMARS: Good news. Don't they use the same method of control -- alternate tillage and cropping -- to get rid of a lot of other weeds?

MOORE: Yes, it's a standard method. Now of course there are circumstances where you need a special method of weed control. Along fences and roadsides, for example, where you can't get in to cultivate, you can get rid of weeds by using a chemical like sodium chlorate.

DUMARS: Considering how the chemical industry has gone ahead during the war -- bet they'll have a lot more of these weed-killers after the war.

MOORE: It won't surprise me a bit if they do. And besides the chemicals --- You know how they get rid of weeds in cotton and sugarcane rows?

DUMARS: With "flame-throwers."

MOORE: Well they're really just a pair of old-fashioned weed-burners mounted on a truck, and they certainly do get the weeds! Some day we may be using this same method on corn and some other crops. Then besides the chemicals and weed-burners, there's still another special way to get rid of weeds. The carrot-growers have found an ally in ordinary, cheap, low-grade petroleum oils. The oil kills the weeds, but it won't hurt the young carrots.

DUMARS: You don't use just any low-grade oil.

MOORE: Oh no! Your County Agent can tell you what to use. And now I guess we're ready for the newest of all the weed-killers, the chemical compound known as "2,4-D."

DUMARS: Developed by plant scientists of the United States Department of Agriculture.

MOORE: Yes, Dr. John Mitchell and Dr. Paul Marth -- following a suggestion made by Dr. E. J. Kraus. In experiments at the Plant Industry Station at Beltsville, Maryland, they found that 2,4-D killed heavy stands of dandelion and narrow-leaf plantain -- root and all.

DUMARS: That's wonderful. And what about quackgrass, and crabgrass?

MOORE: Well, to kill out crabgrass -- they say you'd have to use enough 2,4-D to injure the lawn grass.

DUMARS: I wouldn't want to do that!

MOORE: Naturally not. Now when it comes to bindweed, and Canada thistle -- and other bad farm weeds, --

DUMARS: What'll it do to them?

MOORE: Well that's just what the scientists are trying to find out for us. They've got hundreds of experiments going on throughout the country, and when these are completed -- sometime this fall -- they may have the answer to many serious weed problems.

DUMARS: Then it does look mighty promising -- this 2,4-D.

MOORE: It certainly does. You don't want to be misled by extravagant claims of any weed-killer -- but 2,4-D does look extremely promising for the future. Of course like so many other new things -- it isn't generally available just yet.

And in the meantime -- in the everlasting battle against the weeds -- we can keep on fighting with weed-burners and petroleum oils and chemicals, and with the old reliable method of "clean tillage and cultivation."

ANNOUNCER: (LIVE) You've heard Ernie Moore and Duke DuMars, of the United States Department of Agriculture, in a report on "The Battle Against the Weeds." This is Number 16 in a series entitled "Farm Science Serves the Nation."

